

48th Assembly



NEWSLETTER

October 2004

Ridley-Thomas Enjoys Active and Successful First Assembly Term

Assemblyman Plans to Carry Momentum into Next Legislative Session

With the ink barely dry on legislation signed by the Governor, Assemblyman Mark Ridley-Thomas (D-Los Angeles) celebrated his legislative accomplishments and the conclusion of the 2003-04 Legislative Session, but is anxiously waiting to begin work on issues that continue to face Californians. Twelve of the 14 measures sent to Governors Gray Davis and Arnold Schwarzenegger for consideration were signed into law: five were enacted in 2003 and seven more were approved this year.

"Given the unusual activity that characterized my first term, I am pleased with what I have been able to accomplish this Session," said Ridley-Thomas. "The budget crisis and the confusion caused by the administration change halfway through the session contributed to the small number of bills that made it through the legislative process. Nevertheless, I was able to shepherd 14 bills to the Governor's Desk, 12 of which were ultimately signed. However, there is much work left to be done and now that I have completed



Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas takes the oath of office and is sworn in to represent the 48th Assembly District as the Assembly convenes the 2003-04 Legislative Session on December, 2, 2002.

my first Assembly term and am more familiar with the legislative process, I look forward to an even more productive second term."

Governor Schwarzenegger approved Ridley-Thomas legislation that helps re-educate ex-offenders, provides direct deposit to In Home Supportive Services workers, helps small business owners, provides local governments an additional neighborhood revitalization tool, creates a one-stop shopping location for auto insurance easier, reduces worker's compensation and spurs redevelopment efforts in Exposition Park.

Legislation signed last year by Governor Davis includes measures that accelerate the process for the removal and disposal of abandoned vehicles, allow the optional col-

lection of racial/ethnic data on voter registration cards, make it easier for students to register to vote, require the disclosure of information used to determine car insurance rates and encourages public utilities to hire California residents.

Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas also authored three resolutions this session that dealt with prescription drugs and long-term care: two to help lower the cost of prescription drugs and one to improve the quality of care received at long-term care facilities. Assembly Joint Resolution (AJR) 61 asks the United Secretary of Health and Human Services to certify safe and cost effective prescription drug importation programs. AJR 62 requests the California Congressional Delegation to sponsor and support legislation that repeals provisions of the Medi-

care Drug Law that prohibits the government from negotiating prices for the drug benefit. Assembly Concurrent Resolution 216 urges all California nursing homes to adopt the Quality First 10-Point Plan. The resolutions were approved by the Legislature and do not require the Governor's approval.

In addition to authoring the aforementioned legislation, Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas was one of only four first-term legislators to chair a committee this session. In his capacity as the Chair of the Assembly Committee on Jobs, the Economy and Economic Development, Mr. Ridley-Thomas was instrumental in the advancement of legislation pertaining to all aspects of state and local economic development. Under his direction, the committee held an unprecedented number of fact gathering hearings on a wide range of economic development issues help policy makers identify legislative remedies for some of the State's economic challenges. The hearings presented legislators with valuable information on the impact that immigrant labor, eco-friendly business, small business, tax expenditures and workforce preparedness have on California's economy.

In addition to his duties as Chair of the Jobs Committee, Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas served as member of the following Assembly Committees:

- Appropriations

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Successful First Assembly Term

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The Assemblyman, a longtime champion of returning the NFL to the Coliseum, offers a glimpse of what a newly refurbished Coliseum would potentially look like if a franchise were to return to the historic venue.

- Arts, Entertainment, Sports, Tourism and Internet Media
- Health
- Insurance
- Utilities and Commerce

Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas also chairs the Assembly Select Committee on Professional Sports, an investigative committee that examines the world of professional sports and its impact on California's economy. Earlier this year, the committee held an informational hearing on the economic impact of professional sports in California and specifically, the role that Staples Center played in revitalizing downtown Los Angeles. It is in his capacity as Chair of the Sports Committee that Mr. Ridley-Thomas is spearheading the movement to bring the National Football League to Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and to that end, authored Assembly Bill 2805 which could provide additional redevelopment funds for Exposition Park.

"Despite the State's continued fiscal challenges and the recall fallout, my colleagues and I were able to focus on the task at hand and passed legislation that seeks to improve California's business, living and working environment. However, there are many unresolved issues that await my return to Sacramento in December and I look forward to another year of working with my constituents, colleagues and the new administration to identify ways in which government can be improved to serve the needs of the people."

The Assemblyman's priority legislation for the upcoming session include measures that will prohibit credit scoring for insurance policies, improve voter registration, provide additional gun/public safety, review the State's tax expenditure programs and their impact on the budget process, require community reinvestment by financial and insurance institutions and focus on the State's energy policies. A complete list of the Assemblyman's legislation for the next session will be available on his website early next year.



Legislative Accomplishments

Listed below are the measures Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas had signed in the 2003-04 Legislation Session. Legislation signed by Governor Davis became effective on January 1, 2004 and legislation signed by Governor Schwarzenegger will go in to effect on January 1, 2005.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

AB 478: REMOVING ABANDONED VEHICLES (Signed by Davis)
Increases the "low-value" threshold from \$300 to \$500 to allow for the disposal of additional unwanted vehicles and reflect inflationary increases since the original adoption of the relevant Vehicle Code section. Also increases the exemption threshold, to avoid noticing the vehicle for 72 hours, from \$100 to \$300 to allow for the efficient removal of more abandoned vehicles.

AB 2144: SELLING TAX DEFAULTED PROPERTIES (Signed by Schwarzenegger)
Provides local jurisdictions the option of selling of tax defaulted properties after the property taxes have remained unpaid for three years, which will hasten the revitalization of often under utilized, neglected or abandoned properties by placing them back on the market for reuse and redevelopment, which will generate additional tax revenues for local services. Moreover, it will allow many properties to be salvaged before becoming a community eyesore or reaching the point of complete disrepair.

VOTER EMPOWERMENT

AB 587: PROTECTING VOTING RIGHTS (Signed by Davis)
Requires California voter registration forms to contain a field for the voluntary collection of racial and/or ethnic data.

AB 593: REGISTERING NEW VOTERS (Signed by Davis)
Requires the dissemination of voter registration forms and information to students in high schools, community colleges and campuses of the California State University and University of California. Also eliminates the requirement that permanent absentee voters who fail to vote in primary elections be removed from permanent absent voter rolls and directs the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to forward change of address cards and digitized signatures of individuals who register to vote at DMV to the Secretary of State.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

AB 1181: STOPPING THE INSURANCE RIP OFF (Signed by Davis)
Requires automobile insurers to the following information to policyholders upon the issuance of a new policy and on each subsequent renewal notification:

- Estimated annual mileage driven
- Vehicle Use (e.g. pleasure, commute, business, etc.)
- Driver-related discounts
- Years of driving experience
- Zip code where vehicle is garaged
- Vehicle-related discounts

Additionally requires that traffic convictions and at-fault accidents be disclosed or made available to the policyholder upon request.

AB 2677: PROVIDING CENTRALIZED INSURANCE QUOTES (Signed by Schwarzenegger)
Requires auto insurers to provide consumers with a quote for its lowest price auto policy through a toll-free number, an Internet site or an agent.

CALIFORNIA'S ECONOMIC DEVEMOPMENT

AB 1389: PROTECTING CALIFORNIA JOBS AND CONTRACTS (Signed by Davis)
Requires the Public Utilities Commission to report to the Legislature the number of customers in California and a calculation showing the percentage of the public utility's domestic customer base that resides in California, the number of employees and independent contractors who are California residents and a calculation showing the percentage of the public utility's domestic workforce that resides in California and the amount of capital investment made in California during the preceding 12-month period.

AB 1643: PROTECTING SMALL BUSINESS (Signed by Schwarzenegger)
Requires the Employment Development Department (EDD) to conduct a study on the number of small businesses that have erroneously been classified as employees instead of independent contractors.

AB 2805: INVESTING IN EXPOSITION PARK (Signed by Schwarzenegger)
Grants the Los Angeles City Council the ability to extend the timeline and financing options of the Hoover Redevelopment Area to facilitate further development of the area through the location of an NFL franchise in the Coliseum.

HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

AB 1470: PROVIDING WORKERS WITH DIRECT DEPOSIT (Signed by Schwarzenegger)
Requires the State Controller's Office and the Department of Social Services (DSS) to create a direct deposit payment system for In Home Supportive Services workers.

AB 2919: KEEPING WORKER'S COMPENSATION COST DOWN (Signed by Schwarzenegger)
Deletes the sunset date that allows nurse practitioners (NP's) and physician assistants (PA's) to treat injured workers within the workers' compensation system.

AJR's 61 & 62: INCREASING ACCESS TO LOW COST PRESCRIPTION DRUGS
Urges the federal government to certify a safe and cost efficient prescription drug importation program and asks for a repeal of the Medicare Drug Law that prohibits the government from negotiating for lower drug prices.

ACR 216: IMPROVING NURSING HOMES
Urges California Nursing Homes to adopt the Quality First 10-Point Plan which was created the by American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (AAHSA) – an organization that represents 5,600 providers of long-term care for older adults and endorsed by their California chapter.

PUBLIC SAFETY/EDUCATION

AB 1901: HELPING EX OFFENDERS SUCCEED (Signed by Schwarzenegger)
Modifies the educational requirements for ex offenders in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Church's ex offender education program to ensure the completion of a GED or the improvement of three grade levels in three years.